759 sought, ritually requested of some relative who was a mid-
571 wife.[70] Some persons though continued to limit themselves
602 to delivering their relatives, and never sought magic at all.

Two Worlds: The Natural and the Supernatural

759 To deliver a baby as a midwife or even as an unskill-
772 ed kinsman, embraced 2 aspects: a manual or technical, and a magical. These aspects corresponded to Bang Chan's 2 great worlds of knowledge and experience: the natural and the supernatural.

Midwifery was not alone in embracing both of these categories. Every activity, bus-driving, dancing, printing, or other, had its incorporated magical means to augment the probability of success. Though with the manual or technical skills of the natural world alone one could come through all right with even a modicum of supernatural help, success was greater. No one wanted to take the responsibility and risks of "going it alone" especially when the resources of the supernatural world were so freely and easily accessible to everyone. At the very least, one could start an enterprise on Friday (Wan Suk: Happy Day). The closer an enterprise was to the margin of life and death, however, the larger the supernatural element. In farming, curing, and midwifery, for instance, the ritual component was strong.

• [874] Since these 2 worlds were qualitatively different, each required a different method of learning. The supernatural world, immaterial, royal and sacred, was learned

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[769] 70. Three women had recieved theirs from their mother, mother's mother, and mother's older brother, respectively. A retired midwife planned to give hers "to the daughter or grandchild ("Lan":sex not specified) who was interested enough to ask for it." One man had received his from his father's father. Childbirth magic would hardly be a suitable topic of conversation between priests, but it might have been passed down there, too. The midwife whom one accompanied while learning probably was the source of one's magic. Women's magic was passed down the maternal line only, whereas men could get theirs both from kinsmen and at the temple.

by instruction from a ritually[71] approached teacher. "One cannot accidentally learn. One has to ask to be taught." As a practitioner in this field, the title "mɔ̄" signalized expertise; where teaching was involved, the title was khrū (teacher [McF. 183]) or ʔāchān (professor [McF.990]). Speech was the key to this tradition, in spite of sacred books and wall-carvings in the temples.[72] Modern education, being book-and-teacher based, shared in this aura. There, even today, listening is more comfortable than reading.

Techniques of the practical, natural world were learned not by teaching but pragmatically by observation, example and experience. Eyes were the key. "I know because I saw," said a midwife. At the highest level of achievement in the natural world one was expert (nak), e.g. convict (nak thōt, an expert in being punished) a tourist (nak thīeo, an expert in roaming around).[73] Within the natural world, an intense pragmatism reigned always emphasizing visual phenomena. People were keenly

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71. To speak ritually one held in the hand the trio of incense, flowers, and a candle. This was the way to cross over from the profane to the sacred world, to inform (bɔ̄k) or make a request of, a sacred being (a teacher, priest, king, or deity). The tiny flame of the offering invoked holy fire, and so had the effect of making one's words compelling, for no one could gainsay a request under such circumstances. A husband about to deliver his wife held incense, flower, and candle in hand as he requested the help of ancestors and spirits. (Bishop Pallegoix saved the existence of his mission by thus approaching the King [Pallegoix, Vol. 2:201]). The trio of offerings, whether at the 4 corners of the lying-in fire-floor, or in "hat phlī krathong" at a "thām khwan" rite, or even in an ordinary khwan khao made all actions and words compelling.

72. Because words, immaterial and invisable, lay at the base of occultism, words as continuous agents of power permeated Bang Chan's ordinary daily life. This was why words, verbal play, and punning initiated action: pregnant women attended the monks' "coming out of retreat" (ɔ̄k phansā) so that the child would "come out" (ɔ̄k) easily.

73. It should not be forgotten that most activities in the supernatural world had their technical sides, and the term "nak" was used there too. A curer had to learn his herbs; a dancer, his steps; and a master of ceremonies, the words of the chants.